Ballast collection and other activities are also in progress in both the sections.

(d) and (e) A survey for doubling of Bangalore-Mysore section had been completed in 1997-98. As per the survey-report, the cost of doubling of this line from Bangalore to Mysore including the two sanctioned patches was worked out as Rs. 240.48 crore with electrification and Rs. 193.80 crore without electrification. The survey was got updated in 2000-2001 as per which the updated cost was worked out as Rs. 265.23 crore with electrification with a rate of return of 6.50%.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Task Force on Bio-Technological Application in Agriculture

80. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Task force on application of Bio-technology in Agriculture recommended for Constitution of an autonomous National Bio-technology Regulatory Authority for promoting and monitoring the use of Bio-technology in Agriculture;

(b) if so, the major recommendations made by the Task Force;

(c) whether the Task Force also suggested for a single-window clearance for new genetically-modified varieties; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Major recommendations of the Task Force are enclosed as Statement (*See* below).

(c) and (d) The Task Force has recommended streamlining of regulatory/approval mechanism with a view to expedite the process of evaluation and release of GM crops and setting up of National Bio-technology Regulatory Authority.

Statement

Major recommendations of the Task Force:

- The bottom line of our national agricultural biotechnology policy should be the economic well being of farm families, food security

of the nation, health security of the consumer protection of the environment and the security of our national and international trade in farm commodities.

- Transgenic research should not be undertaken in crops/ commodities where our international trade may be affected, *e.g.*, Basmati rice, Soyabean or Darjeeling Tea.
- Research and extension systems should be sensitive to the biodiversity, conservation and socio-economic context of our composite agrarian system.
- The Task Force has recommended reduction in levels and number of steps required in evaluation of environmental clearance of GM products/transgenics and the need for transparency and professionalism in regulatory process. There should be concurrent assessment for bio-safety and agronomic performance without compromising the principles of bio and environmental safety.
- While the present system of granting approval for contained and open field trials for bio-safety may continue to rest with the RCGM, the multi-locational farmers field trial for value for cultivation and use should the sole responsibility of ICAR and the concerned company/institution.
- Commercial release/notifications/registration should be with ICAR/ DAC as the release for use by farmers comes under the domain of Ministry of Agriculture.
- Once an event/gene has been declared bio-safe, its derivatives need not always be evaluated for bio-safety to the same extent again.
- Post release monitoring should be ensured by Department of Agriculture and Cooperation and ICAR and the concerned State Agricultural Universities.
- The Task Force has recommended for setting up of a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority, which should have two wings one dealing with agricultural and food biotechnology and the other for medical and pharmaceutical biotechnology. NBRA could be attached to an appropriate Ministry for necessary administrative support.

- There is a need to prioritize and reorient our research programmes relating to transgenic research in crops, animal and fisheries, in order to maximize benefits from limited resources in areas of relevance to food, livelihood and ecological security.
- There are regions in India which represent either primary or secondary centers of genetic diversity in major crops like rice. These areas should be conserved for posterity as **"Agro-biodiversity Sanctuaries"**. A Technical Committee may be constituted by ICAR, NBPGR, DBT, Deptt. of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment and Forests (Botanical, Zoological and Forest Surveys of India) to develop guidelines for earmarking areas as Agro-biodiversity Sanctuaries and Organic Farming zones.
- At least one Ag-Biotech Park on the model of the one developed by ICRISAT in Hyderabad may established in every State in collaboration with NABARD.
- A special insurance scheme for GM crops should be devised and introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture. There is a need to explore the possibility of the seed company selling GM seeds providing farmers with an insurance cover, so that they may get some relief if crops fail.
- The Task Force has suggested provision of Rs. 1200 crores of additional funds during Tenth Plan for giving effect to its recommendations-Rs. 300 crores for capacity building, Rs. 200 crores for Venture Capital, Rs. 150 crores for setting of NBRA, Rs. 400 crores to upgrade research infrastructure in ICAR and Animal Husbandary and Dairying and Rs. 150 crores for establishing Ag-biotech Parks.

Investment in agriculture

81. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is decline in public investment in agriculture; and

(b) if so, the action taken for more investment to revive growth in agriculture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) According to the figures compiled by the